

DRILLING IN ANWR

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, energy independence should be a goal of this Congress. Worldwide demand for petroleum has increased during the last decade, and the growth of production has been relatively flat. The inevitable result is higher prices at the gasoline pump, and the reality is that it takes time to go from the oil field to the gasoline station, and we have lost considerable time in this regard.

In 1995, in the 104th Congress, H.R. 2491, which was passed, would have allowed oil exploration in the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge. The Department of Energy has estimated that between 1 and 1.3 million barrels of oil a day could be derived from this source. Unfortunately, in 1995, that legislation was vetoed by then-President Clinton.

That was nearly 10 years ago; and given a time line of 7 to 14 years for building the pipeline structure, it is time we can scarcely afford.

Mr. Speaker, I have been to ANWR. The vast coastal plain is unsuitable for habitation during the summer months because of its marshy consistency. Any caribou unlucky enough to calve in this region would likely die from exsanguination at the hands of the mosquitoes there.

The people in ANWR are counting on this Congress to do the right thing and allow them, the rightful owners of these mineral rights, to begin developing the resources that are granted to them upon statehood in 1959.

As we say in Texas, "Time's a wasting."

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken after 6:30 p.m. today.

COMMUNITY BANKING MONTH

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 591) expressing the gratitude of the House of Representatives for the contributions made by America's community banks to the Nation's economic well-being and prosperity and the sense of the House of Representatives that a month should be designated as "Community Banking Month."

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 591

Whereas, since our Nation's founding, community banks have supported their commu-

nities as they prospered and grew, and today more than 8,700 community banks continue the tradition of giving back to their local communities through nearly 40,000 banking offices;

Whereas, with more than \$2,275,000,000,000 in assets, community banks know that when money stays in town it becomes a renewable resource, creating an economic cycle that constantly revitalizes and stimulates local communities;

Whereas community banks are working citizens in their communities in every sense of the word with more than 514,000 full-time and part-time employees;

Whereas these banks have made significant contributions to the economic well-being of our Nation through their financial support, their dedication as good neighbors and, above all, their service as financially sound and reliable sources of economic lifeblood in our communities;

Whereas the Nation's community banks focus on the prosperity of individuals and small businesses in their hometowns and have reinvested, on average, 95 percent of their loan portfolio in their own communities through home mortgages and small business, agricultural, and student loans;

Whereas community banks play a significant role in local economic development efforts by financing new businesses and stimulating the economy to produce jobs and new opportunities and, as a group, they contribute an important and strong part of the Nation's economic fabric;

Whereas community banks have made nearly 3,160,000 loans to small businesses, totaling over \$275,500,000,000 and nearly 720,500 loans to small farms, totaling nearly \$37,500,000,000;

Whereas community banks also enjoy the trust of their customers; indeed, community banks are just neighbors are helping neighbors build their homes, save for higher education, plan for retirement and fulfill other dreams; and

Whereas community banks have long helped in the development of our communities and the Nation as a whole, and are fully prepared to make many more contributions: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) the House of Representatives expresses its gratitude for the contributions made by America's community banks to the Nation's economic well-being and prosperity; and

(2) it is the sense of the House of Representatives that—

(A) a "Community Banking Month" should be designated to raise public awareness of, and public appreciation for, the contributions of the helpful institutions that are our Nation's community banks; and

(B) the President should issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe the month with appropriate programs and activities.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. CAPUANO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation and insert any extraneous materials on the resolution.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arizona?

There was no objection.

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, H. Res. 591 expresses the gratitude for the contributions made by America's community banks to the Nation's economic well-being and prosperity and the sense of the House of Representatives that a month should be designated as Community Banking Month. This legislation was introduced by the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. BACHUS) to recognize community banks for their contribution to the very fabric of our community.

Community banks help to shape communities into centers of commerce and entrepreneurship and provide for community and industrial development.

Community bankers are themselves among the leading leaders of our community, engaging in civic and benevolent activities. Nationwide, there are over 8,700 community banks serving their local communities through almost 40,000 banking offices.

Community banks have reinvested on average 95 percent of their loan portfolio in their own communities through home mortgages and small businesses, agricultural, and student loans. This reinvestment plays an important role in local economic development and in efforts to finance new businesses, as well as stimulating the local economy to produce jobs and new opportunities.

Community banks are themselves small businesses, so they understand the needs of small business owners. Their core concern is lending to small businesses and farms. Studies have shown that they are the primary advisors to small businesses.

Community banks have made nearly 3,160,000 loans to small businesses, and over 720,500 loans to small farms.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the community banks and in recognition of their great contribution to our local communities and to our small businesses around the country.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 591, a resolution recognizing the contributions of community banks to the Nation's economic well-being and prosperity and expressing the sense of the House that a month should be designated as Community Banking Month.

Community banks play a vital role for our country. Of the 7,712 commercial banks in operation today, all but 419 are community banks having assets of less than \$1 billion. Community banks are known for being close to their customers and provide the leadership for many civic endeavors. These bankers are able to make loan decisions locally and reinvest local deposits into their local communities.

Community bankers also are active in helping people understand the sometimes complex nature of the banking business. Many community bankers participate in efforts to help consumers

know the dangers posed by identity thieves. In Georgia, for example, these bankers made presentations to almost 50,000 of our citizens, giving them tips on how to avoid becoming a victim. These same bankers also helped educate our citizens on how to apply for a business loan, how to choose banking as a career, and how to get a mortgage refinanced.

While the total number of community banks in the United States is decreasing due to consolidation, new community banks are proliferating. In fact, 1999 witnessed the highest number of new community banks formed in nearly a decade, with 268 new charters reported.

Community banks focus attention on the needs of local families, businesses, and farmers. They channel most of their loans in the neighborhoods where their depositors live and work. Community banks offer their customers services at attractive prices. For example, average rates for checking accounts and other depository services on average are 15 percent lower at small banks than at large, multistate institutions, according to the 2001 PIRG report.

They can offer nimble decision-making on business loans, because decisions are made locally. And because community banks are themselves small businesses, they understand the needs of small business owners. Their core concern is lending to small businesses and farms.

What does it mean to be a community bank? Community banking is a devotion to serving community customers and communities. They put people into homes, serve small businesses, and help them grow and prosper. They provide student loans and set up retirement plans for their customers.

Mr. Speaker, community banks and the more than half a million people who work for them truly deserve our recognition for their contributions to the Nation's economy and well-being.

Mr. OXLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 591, a resolution expressing the gratitude of the House of Representatives for the contributions made by America's community banks to the Nation's economic well-being and prosperity and the sense of the House of Representatives that a month should be designated as "Community Banking Month". Community banks are the lifeblood of our local economies, and this is an appropriate way to recognize their contribution.

Mr. Speaker, I am including for the record correspondence between the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. DAVIS) and myself regarding the jurisdictional interest of the Committee on Government Reform. I appreciate his efforts in permitting this resolution to reach the floor quickly.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,
Washington, DC, June 21, 2004.

Hon. MICHAEL G. OXLEY,
Chairman, Committee on Financial Services,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for consulting with the Government Reform Com-

mittee regarding H. Res. 591, expressing the gratitude of the House of Representatives for the contributions made by America's community banks to the Nation's economic well-being and prosperity and the sense of the House of Representatives that a month should be designated as "Community Banking Month". As you know, the Committee on Government Reform has jurisdiction over holidays and celebrations.

Because of your willingness to consult with my committee, I will not seek a sequential referral of the resolution to the Committee on Government Reform. By agreeing to not seek sequential referral, the Government Reform Committee does not waive its jurisdiction over H. Res. 591. I respectfully request that you include this letter and your response in the Congressional Record during consideration of this legislation on the House floor. Thank you for your attention to these matters.

Sincerely,

TOM DAVIS,
Chairman.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES,
Washington, DC, June 21, 2004.

Hon. TOM DAVIS,
Chairman, Committee on Government Reform,
Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN DAVIS: Thank you for your recent letter regarding your Committee's jurisdictional interest in H. Res. 591, a resolution expressing the gratitude of the House of Representatives for the contributions made by America's community banks to the Nation's economic well-being and prosperity and the sense of the House of Representatives that a month should be designated as "Community Banking Month".

I acknowledge your committee's jurisdictional interest in this legislation and appreciate your cooperation in allowing speedy consideration of the resolution. I agree that your decision to forego further action on the bill will not prejudice the Committee on the Government Reform with respect to its jurisdictional prerogatives on this or similar legislation.

Finally, I will include a copy of your letter and this response in the Congressional Record when the legislation is considered by the House.

Thank you again for your assistance.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL G. OXLEY,
Chairman.

Mr. BEAUPREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 591, and to honor the significant, longstanding contribution of America's Community Banks.

In hometowns all across America, Community Banks have been the anchor for countless generations.

Moms and dads raising families, educating their children, planning for a comfortable retirement; farmers, entrepreneurs and innumerable small businesses that are the cornerstone of our free-market economy; churches, hospitals, schools, civic organizations—indeed the entire fabric of America's culture—all know they have a partner and friend in their hometown Community Bank.

Jimmy Stewart romanticized the legacy of hometown bankers as George Bailey in the Christmas classic, "It's a Wonderful Life".

Mr. Speaker, while the movie's plot was fictional, in neighborhoods and towns all across America, there are real life George Baileys that work hard and nobly, extend a helping hand, help see families and businesses through difficulties, and make dreams come true on a daily basis.

Like the other small businesses in America's hometowns, Community Banks are typically owned by the folks right there in the community. They know their neighbors, and their neighbors know them. They know a handshake still matters. Their kids go to school together, and they see each other at church.

Community Banks depend on the people in the community for their success, and the community depends on the bank to be there for them—through good times and tough times. It's a partnership that isn't drawn up on any contract, but it is understood and established with a bond far stronger than paper and ink.

So, Mr. Speaker, I proudly support H. Res. 591, and urge all my colleagues in the House to join me in expressing gratitude for the contribution of our Nation's Community Banks, as one of our country's great traditions.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support H. Res. 591 which recognizes the contributions made by America's community banks to this Nation's economic well-being and prosperity. These community banks are imperative to the success of any local community. Their recognition today is well deserved and I am in support of the effort to designate one month as Community Banking Month.

Community banks, while often overlooked, offer many advantages to the people and areas they serve. Community banks focus attention on the needs of local families, businesses, and farmers. Community banks channel most of their loans to the neighborhoods where their depositors live and work. Community bank officers are typically deeply involved in local community affairs. Many community banks are willing to consider character, family history and discretionary spending in making loans. Finally, because community banks are themselves small businesses, they understand the needs of small business owners. Their core concern is lending to small businesses and farms. Studies show that they are the primary advisers of small businesses. It is fairly evident that community banks are truly built by the community's efforts to serve the community's interests.

I am of the belief that a Community Banking Month will help truly reflect the necessary efforts that community banks make to serve their customers. Not all businesses can be large, not all banks can be national; there will always be a need for these services to be provided on the community level. I want to thank all the community banks in Houston and throughout the United States who on a day like today will help some young couple secure their first home mortgage or allow a young student to go to college by extending a student loan. It is moments like these and the opportunities they provide that truly allow us to realize our own piece of the American Dream.

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 591.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR NATIVE AMERICANS ACT OF 2004

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 4471) to clarify the loan guarantee authority under title VI of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 4471

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Homeownership Opportunities for Native Americans Act of 2004".

SEC. 2. FEDERAL GUARANTEES FOR FINANCING FOR TRIBAL HOUSING ACTIVITIES.

Section 601 of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 (25 U.S.C. 4191) is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(d) LIMITATION ON PERCENTAGE.—A guarantee made under this title shall guarantee repayment of 95 percent of the unpaid principal and interest due on the notes or other obligations guaranteed."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) and the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. CAPUANO) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Arizona. (Mr. RENZI).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this legislation, and to insert any extraneous material thereon.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Arizona?

There was no objection.

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself 5 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to have on the House floor today H.R. 4471, the Homeownership Opportunities For Native Americans Act, which I introduced earlier this week with my colleague, the gentleman from Utah. (Mr. MATHE-SON).

This bill simply returns the guarantee level for the title VI program to 95 percent. HUD had been administering guarantees at this level until OMB, for technical statutory reasons, reduced it to 80 percent.

The lower guaranteed level would mean less participation in this program. Private investors are slowly becoming more comfortable investing in Indian country, and it is critical that this relationship remain in a fostered environment. To this point, asking in-

vestors to accept a 20 percent risk rather than the 5 percent that they had before will do nothing but impede the much-needed development in these areas.

This past May, the Subcommittee on Housing of the Committee on Financial Services held a hearing on the Navajo Reservation in Tuba City, Arizona. We saw children with asthma living in houses with dirt floors and collapsing ceilings. Decreasing the guarantee rate essentially decreases the chance that these children will be able to move from homes in deplorable conditions into safe and healthy homes.

The title VI loan guarantee assists federally recognized tribes and tribally designated housing entities who want to finance eligible, affordable housing activities, but are unable to secure financing without the assistance of Federal guarantees.

This program is very well collateralized, as tribes must pledge current and future housing block grant guarantee appropriations for the repayment of these guaranteed funds. This program has administered \$77 million in guarantees and has not experienced even one single default.

I thank the gentleman from Ohio (Chairman NEY); the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), the ranking member; and the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MATHESON) for their enthusiasm on this issue and the support behind this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CAPUANO. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, today, the House takes up important housing legislation to help Native American communities across America achieve homeownership.

The bill we are taking up today is a direct result of a recent hearing held by the Subcommittee on Housing of the Committee on Financial Services, of which I am a member, in the Navajo Nation. With the leadership of the subcommittee chairman, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY), and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS), the ranking member, the subcommittee learned of the significant housing challenges facing our Native American communities. Members who attended the hearing in the Navajo Nation came back to report enormous challenges in housing conditions that resemble those of some Third World nations. This bill is the first legislative result of that important field hearing.

The legislation was introduced by the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) and the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MATHESON), both of whom represent the Navajo Nation. I commend the leadership of both my colleagues on this legislation.

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Unfortunately, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MATHESON) was unable to be here today at this time. And I am

pleased to be here representing him in his absence on behalf of this important legislation that will, as I stated, help Native Americans achieve home ownership. The gentleman from Utah (Mr. MATHESON) has exercised great leadership, not only in housing issues for Native Americans, but for giving his Navajo Nation constituents a strong voice in Congress.

This bill sets the loan guarantee level at 95 percent for a vital Native American housing program at HUD. This is the level that has been used since its implementation. However, the law is currently silent regarding the loan guarantee level and HUD would be forced by administrative rule to lower that level to 80 percent, unless Congress sets the level at 95 percent, which this bill will accomplish for the purposes that ensure that the very important housing program will continue to be used to help our Native American friends.

Again, I would like it to thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY) and the ranking member, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) for their leadership in convening the field hearing in the Navajo Nation that led to this important legislation. I commend the leadership of the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) on this bill and his efforts on behalf of the Navaho people. I also would like to express appreciation to my esteemed colleague, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. MATHESON), for being a leader on this bill and for being a strong leader and advocate in Congress for all Native American items.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. RENZI. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. GREEN).

Mr. GREEN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of my colleague, Mr. RENZI's bill, the Homeownership Opportunities for Native Americans Act. I would like to begin by commending the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI) for the important work he is doing in the area of Native American housing. He is shining a light on the vital need for safe and affordable housing on Indian reservations all across this country, a need that runs deep, a need which our government has all too often failed to address.

I was unable to attend the Housing Subcommittee hearing earlier this year that has been referenced in the district of the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. RENZI), but I have several reservations in my district and my own State, and I know firsthand just how critical the need for housing is.

H.R. 4471 amends the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act of 1996 to provide statutory authority for the Title VI program to continue to operate at a 95 percent loan guarantee level. While the program has been operating at this level for some time, a recent decision by OMB to reduce the loan guarantee